

PLAIN TALKS

May 1988



The three "R's" of an outage

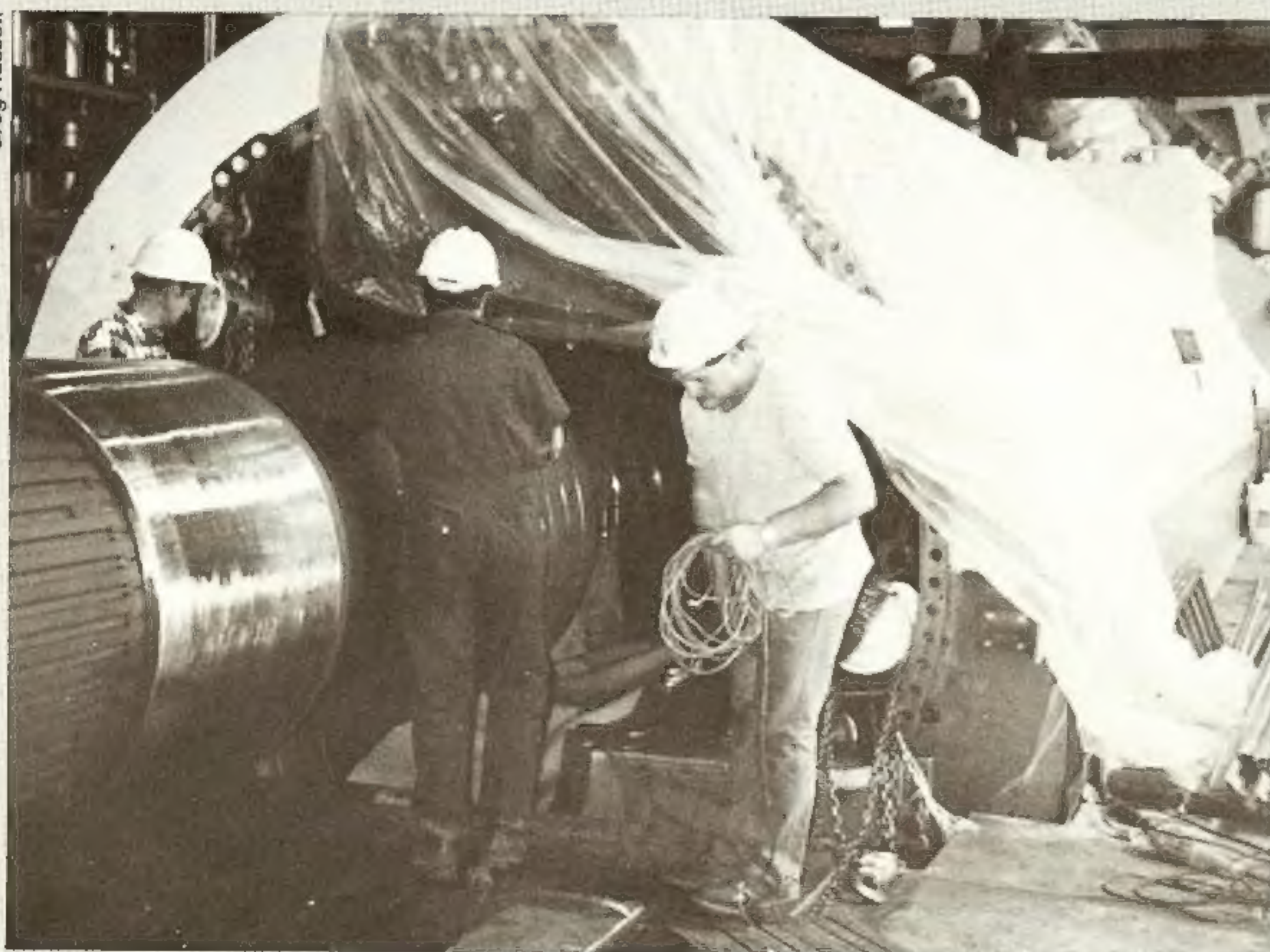
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Greg Russell



From left, Billy Tadlock, mechanic-1st class, Dan Campbell, electrician-1st class, and Russell Thibodeaux, electrician-1st class, carefully make sure the 65-ton rotor does not damage the inside of the Willow Glen Unit 5 generator as it is installed. The work was part of an outage at the plant near Baton Rouge.

On the cover, Andy Grosze, left, production support engineer, watches as a low-pressure stream of air flows through the stator coil while production support engineer Ray Stanley records the readings. The stator coil is the wiring that surrounds the rotor inside of the generator.

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Employees who change residences or offices should fill out company mailing-address-forms (GSU0012-00-81) and return them to the mailroom in the Edison Plaza. GSU publications, departmental mailings and other company information are not automatically forwarded; addresses must be corrected when employees move.

With string of accomplishments, Rodney Tompkins hits the bull's-eye

by Robert Adams

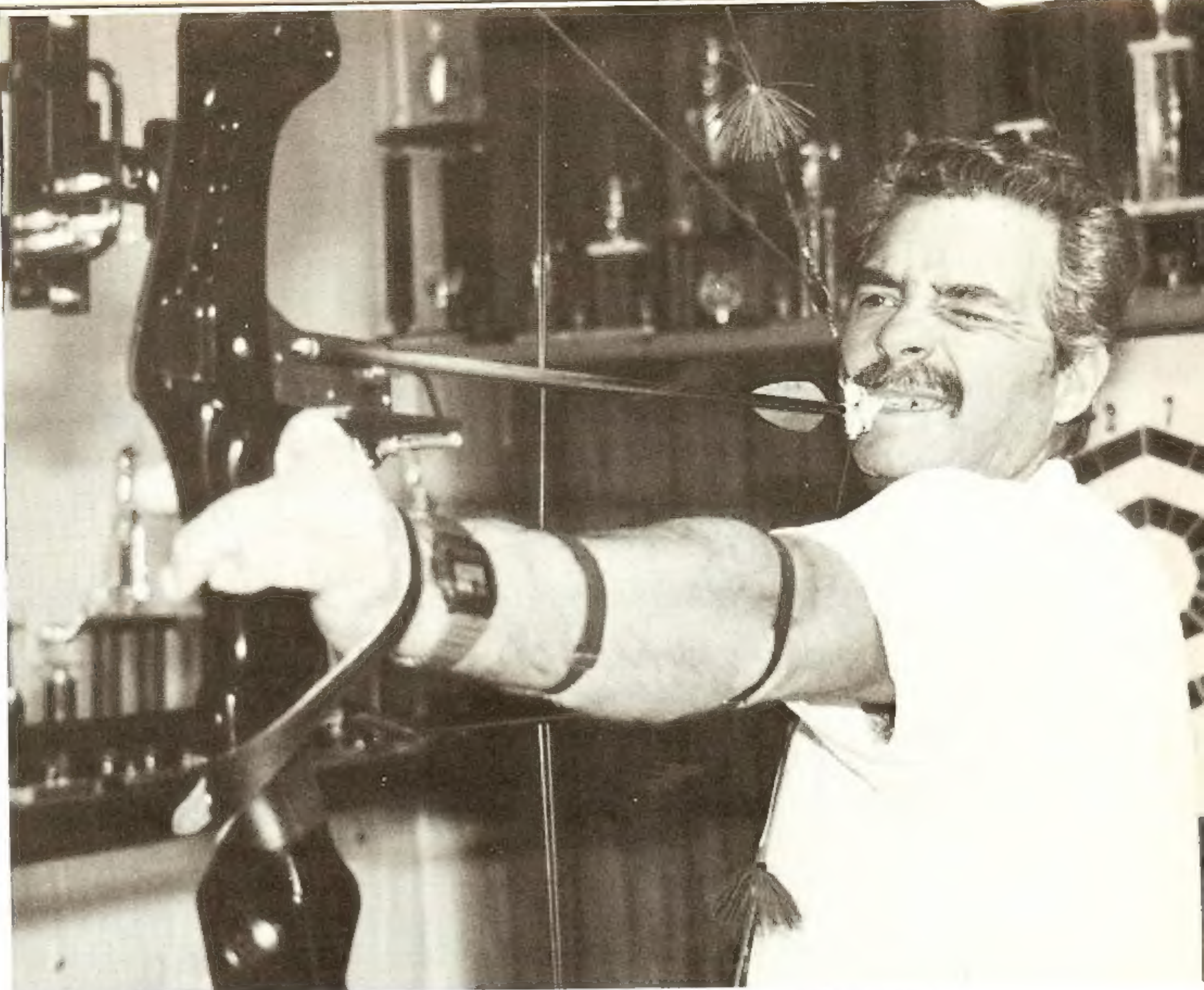
He draws an arrow from the quiver and lays it on the bow. Raising the bow, he pulls back the string, aims and lets fly. "That's a kill," says Rodney Tompkins, division substation operator, as he sees the arrow has hit in the shoulder area of his target — a paper drawing of a deer.

Accurate shots may be difficult for even an experienced archer. But the significance of his accuracy becomes more apparent when you realize that Tompkins has practiced little more than a month — and that he lost his right arm and two fingers of his left hand in a substation accident over 20 years ago. The years since have seen a string of accomplishments for him, both on and off the job.

Besides raising three children of their own, Tompkins and his wife have been foster parents to over 40 children, many of them teenagers. "It's hard to find homes for teenagers," says Tompkins, "but we were young and got along with them fairly easily."

The capability to raise foster

Robert Adams



Rodney Tompkins aims at his target inside A. C.'s Archery in Port Acres. With his teeth, he pulls a piece of teflon attached to the string to draw the bow.

children successfully may benefit him in handling his job as a dispatcher in the Port Arthur Division. He has worked at GSU for over 23 years and says he likes dealing with the public over the phone.

"One person's problem is different from another's," he says. He estimates that 80 percent of customer complaints result from problems with their equipment, not GSU's. "I can suggest things over the phone for the customer to try to solve the problem and maybe save the troubleshooter a trip," he adds.

Tompkins, described by his supervisor as an above average employee, says, "It's difficult to deal with a major outage and handle customer complaints at the same time. But the computer system helps a lot. I don't have to constantly refer to the books — all the information I need is on the computer."

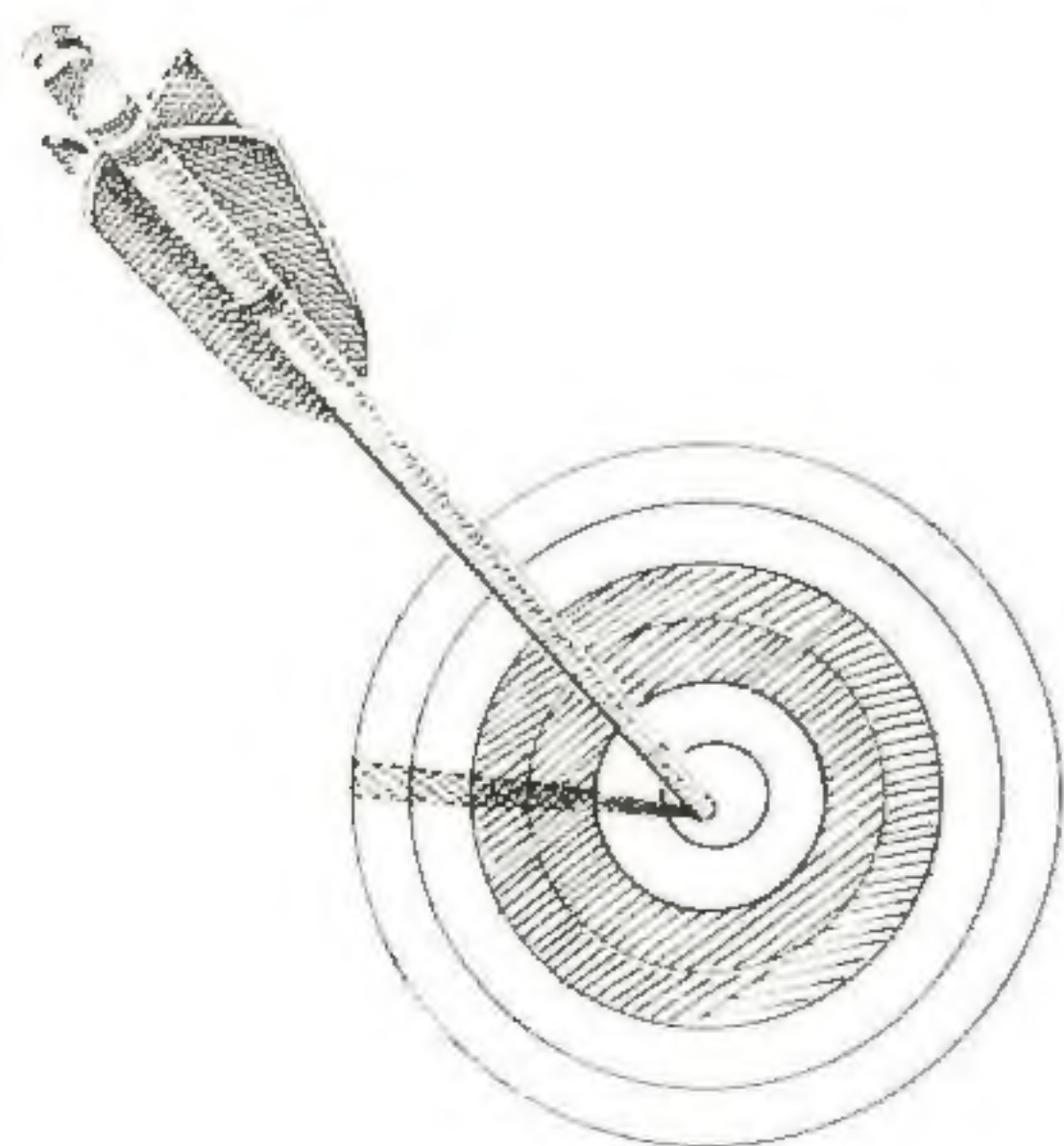
Tompkins leads an active sports life as well. "My wife loves to fish," he says, "and we used to fish together a lot. But when I'm fish-

ing, I have to use my artificial arm and I hate it, so I do more hunting now."

A javelina hunt near Laredo last February sparked his interest in his latest hunting venture — bow hunting. "On that trip, I drove a bow hunter around on my four-wheeler," says Tompkins, "but I'd always wanted to try bow hunting myself." Shortly afterward, a friend showed Tompkins a bow rigged with a piece of leather so he could pull the string with his teeth. As he did so, he felt immediately that he could be a success as a bow hunter.

Tompkins bought a new bow and still works to refine the special design he needs. "We've had one problem after another," says Tompkins adding that other bow hunters contribute from their own equipment to help him work out the difficulties.

He has yet to try it in actual hunting conditions. But he is confident that he will be successful next season. "I can't wait to try it," says Tompkins.



Are you getting the most from your

by E. Kelly Merritt

Chances are there are some things you like about your job at Gulf States and some things you don't. But when discussing the good points, employees will almost always bring up the GSU benefits package. You can even increase the value of your benefits by taking advantage of the excellent opportunities the package has to offer.

"One of the best ways to maximize your benefits is through participation in the **Thrift Plan**," says Employee Benefits manager Mike Sealy. "The company's 50 cent match of each dollar you contribute, up to 6 percent of your base pay, is an offer too good to refuse. Additionally, enrolling in the 401(k) option lets you reduce your taxable income while you save." However, Sealy adds, "The Thrift Plan should be thought of as a long-term savings plan." In fact, the government considers the GSU Thrift Plan a retirement plan.

A benefit to be added soon is the **Thrift Plan loan provision**. It will allow Thrift Plan members to make loans from their own accounts at competitive rates. "You become your own banker by funding your own loan and paying yourself the interest," Sealy adds.

Like the Thrift Plan, other GSU benefits work best when used wisely.

All eligible employees are covered by the **GSU medical plans**. Filling out the forms properly and reporting all medical expenses will ensure that your plan pays your

claim properly. Checking your medical bills to make sure you are not over-billed will help to hold down costs. Using the **America's Pharmacy** mail order drug program to obtain medication for long-term illnesses will maximize your prescription drug coverage. Medications for treatment of short-term illnesses should still be bought from local pharmacists and filed with your medical plan.

"Maximization of medical benefits does not mean that you spend as much as you can on medical treatment, but that you get quality care at the most reasonable cost," Sealy adds.

For instance, if you are planning to check into a hospital for tests or treatment, see if you can get that treatment as an outpatient instead. The medical plans pay 100 percent for many outpatient surgical procedures and for outpatient testing done within five days of surgery. Wise use can mean less cost to you now and can help to hold down future premium increases.

To get the most from your **dental plan**, visit your dentist regularly. The GSU dental plans pay the complete cost of two routine checkups each year. The routine visits are cheaper for the company and the employee because dental problems are detected early, before they become costly. For example, corrective procedures, such as fillings and oral surgery, are paid, after a \$25 deductible, at 80 percent, while major services, such as



Mike Sealy

crowns and bridges, are paid at 50 percent.

Eligible employees are automatically covered by **GSU Group Term Life Insurance**. Check **Your Employee Handbook** for details on your coverage. Employees have the option to purchase additional coverage for themselves or family members through a supplemental policy. The supplemental coverage premium is paid through payroll deduction and, Sealy says, is priced competitively.

The **Employee Stock Option Plan** provides for distribution of shares of GSU Common Stock to employees at no cost (ESOP1) or additional shares at a dollar for dollar company match (ESOP2). The ESOP plans are activated only for years when GSU qualifies for certain federal income tax credits. Although the plan has been inactive

benefits?

recently, Sealy recommends that employees sign up for ESOP in case the company does qualify in the future.

The **Financial Aid to Education** program pays for 75 percent of the cost of books and tuition for courses you take toward a college degree. To qualify, the degree program or courses must relate to company operations. College work toward a graduate degree may be fully reimbursed. This plan helps pay for your education while you are studying and "could well enhance your career path," Sealy says.

The **Retirement Plan** provides long-term employees with a monthly income after they complete their career at GSU. Sealy cautions that the GSU retirement plan benefit plus Social Security benefits will not equal your pre-retirement base salary. To use the Retirement Plan wisely, he says, each employee must be aware of the retirement benefit formula and know how salary, length of service and early retirement will affect their monthly pension.

"To augment their retirement income, each employee should have a financial plan that helps them get the most from their GSU benefits as well as benefits and income from sources like Social Security and Medicare. The people who are happiest with their retirement are those who've managed their benefits and other assets to the point where they are financially secure," he says.

AIDS in the workplace — What are the risks?

by Betty Gavora

As AIDS education meetings continue, one question keeps coming up: "Do we have any AIDS cases at GSU?"

While Gulf States has not experienced any known cases of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), some utilities have already experienced AIDS cases.

But, according to health officials, AIDS is not a threat in the workplace because AIDS is **not** spread by "casual contact." "Casual contact" includes such situations as sharing an office, work equipment, restrooms, a telephone, the employee cafeteria and the water cooler.

In fact, specialists at Johns Hopkins Hospital say that, compared to measles, the flu or chicken pox, AIDS is much harder to get. The two main ways the AIDS virus is spread are through sexual contact and the sharing of contaminated needles and syringes used by illegal intravenous (I.V.) drug users.

Also, the Centers for Disease Control have carefully watched the families of AIDS patients, excluding those who have sexual contact. According to the CDC, the families

who took care of these patients for months and months did not get the disease. In fact, the CDC stated that its "best estimate of the risk of household transmission is zero."

But what if there were an AIDS case in the company? How would it be handled? John MacLardie, general manager-industrial relations services, answers, "We realize that AIDS is a life-threatening illness. As long as an employee with AIDS is able to meet acceptable performance and attendance standards, and medical evidence indicates that the employee's condition and actions pose no threat to his own health and safety or the health and safety of other employees, we would treat the employee with AIDS like other employees with defined illnesses."

In fact, MacLardie is quick to point out, "Ironically, the person at highest risk in the workplace would be the person with AIDS ... because his immune system would be severely impaired." Exposure to the flu or an infectious disease that would be considered minor for a healthy person could be fatal to someone with AIDS.



Ronnie Glover, repairman-1st class, repairs the tie wires on the rotor blades of the main boiler feedpump turbine during the recent outage at Willow Glen Station.

At Willow Glen

The three "R's" of an outage

R epairing E replacing R efitting

Photos by E. Kelly Merritt and Greg Russell

Willow Glen Station personnel spent most of March and April repairing, replacing and refitting the Unit 5 generator during a major outage at the plant. Extra workers were called in from Louisiana Station and production support for the outage. With the exception of one part that was returned to the manufacturer for inspection, all of the work was done by GSU people, saving at least \$150,000 in contractor costs.

Past procedure for an outage of this type was for GSU personnel to

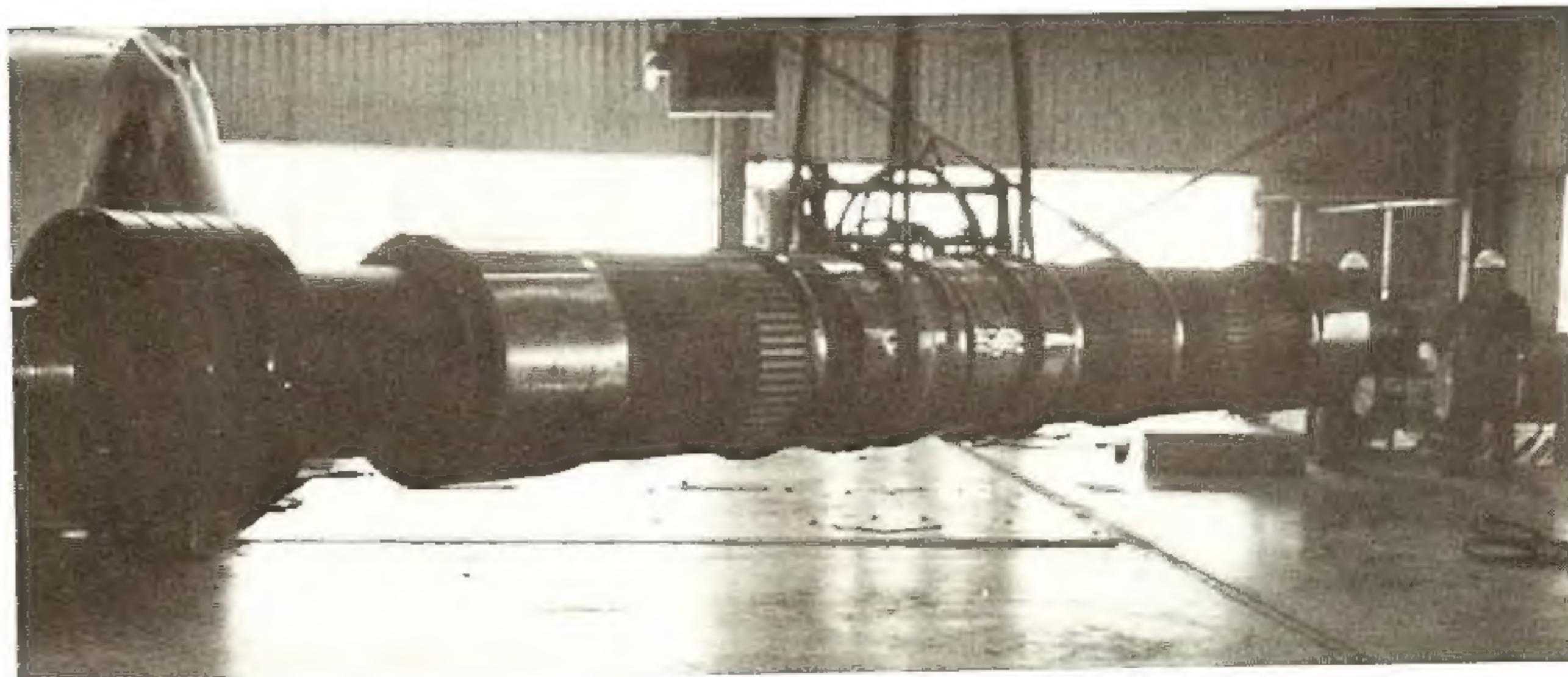
work on the auxiliary equipment and for contractors to inspect and repair the actual generator and rotor. "In past outages," says Ed Trump, director of maintenance support, "we'd bring in an expert from the original equipment manufacturer. He would stay and provide the expertise. We do that internally now." Trump's maintenance support group now takes the place of the expert from the original manufacturer. "It used to be common to spend \$80,000 or more on each 10-to-12 week outage for an ori-

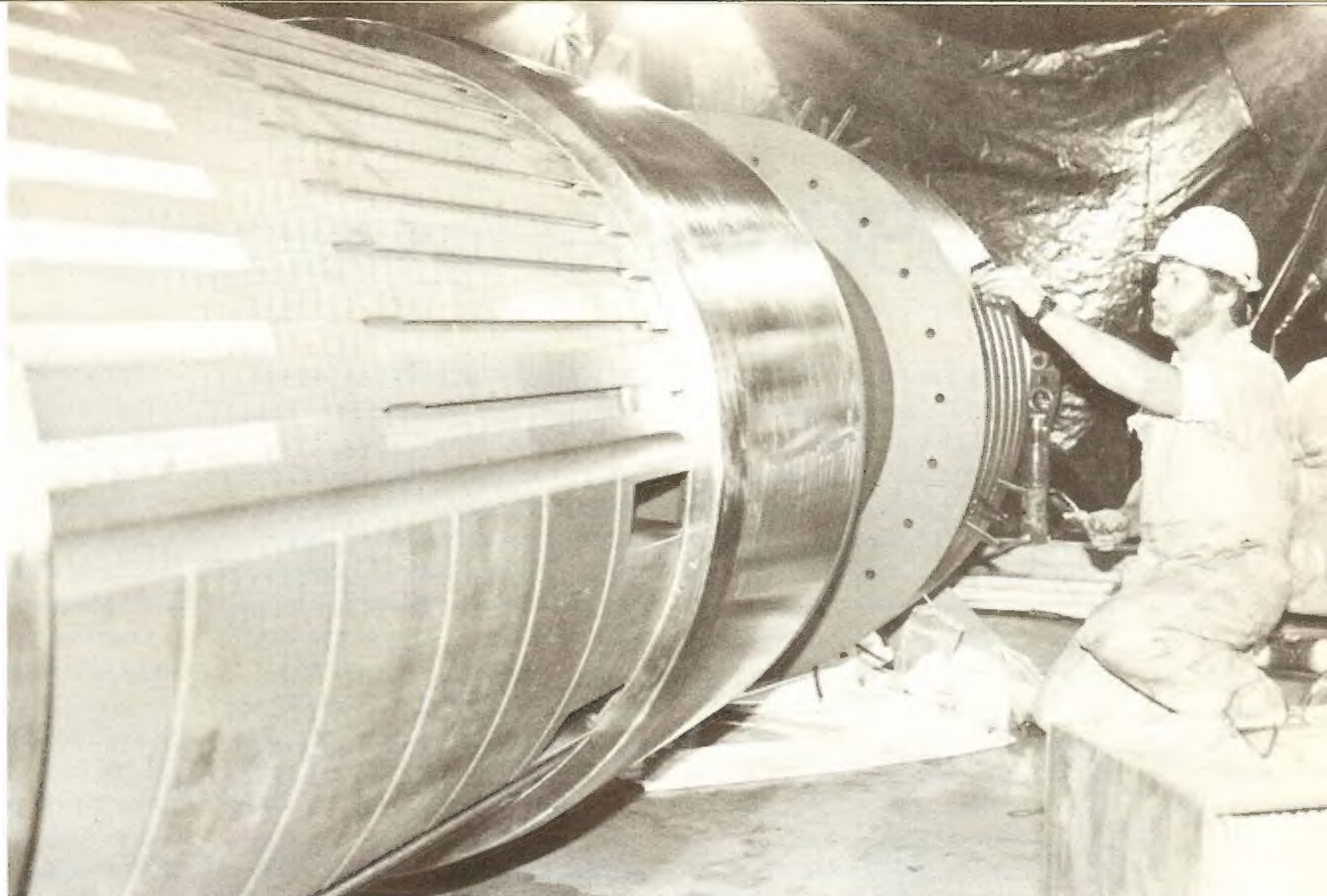
ginal equipment manufacturer's representative," he says.

Outages are scheduled for periodic maintenance. The Willow Glen outage involved the disassembly, inspection and repair of the generator and rotor as well as the examination and repair of the boiler feedpump turbine.

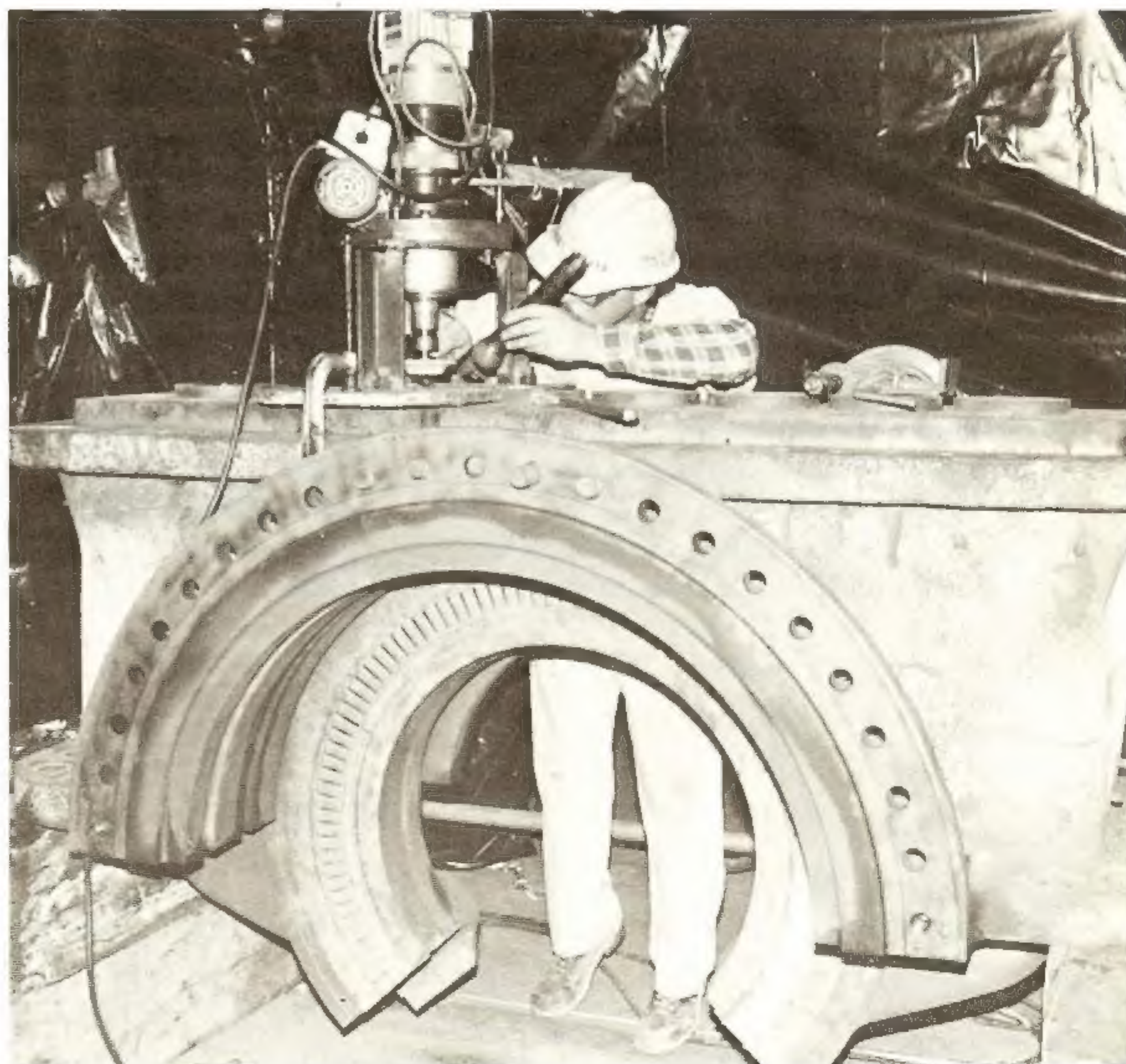
Based on the current schedule, the Willow Glen Unit 5 generator and boiler feedpump turbine won't need additional major maintenance for another five years.

Right, the rotor is positioned for reinstallation.





Above left, Steve Wagner, electrical foreman, points out the critical path schedule for the outage. The path outlines the sequence of work activities to be followed. Above right, Robert Cambre, electrician-1st class, prepares the rotor for re-installation into the generator. The rotor was removed for inspection, testing and cleaning. It was stored in a controlled atmosphere to protect it from moisture buildup. Left, Walter Ford, repairman-1st class, inspects one of the feedpump turbine's stationary-blade-rings for cracks. Below, Jerry Rhodus, repairman-1st class, machines the control valve seats on the control valve steam chest.



GSU seeks to lower thermometer

As health care costs continue to rise, companies across the nation look at ways to control these costs. To gain a better understanding of what other companies are doing, Employee Benefits personnel have examined cost containment practices of some of these companies.

"By finding out what other companies are doing, we can see what else we can do to lower the cost of medical claims," says Jommy Holder, coordinator-employee benefits. "And lower claims dollars mean lower premiums for Gulf States and GSU employees."

For example, Holder says that 60 cents of every dollar Gulf States employees pay for medical costs goes for hospital charges. Some ways these costs can be lowered are through outpatient surgery, preadmission testing, utilization reviews, hospice care, home health care and large case management.

Gulf States reviews these topics and others to learn how companies are containing health care costs. For example, Holder represents GSU in a coalition of major companies in the Beaumont area who work together and share ideas on health benefit management issues. Gulf States also conducts benefits surveys of major companies and other utilities each year to see how they manage similar costs. In fact, 22 companies were surveyed recently.

Here's what some of these companies and Gulf States are doing to

lower the thermometer on health care costs:

Outpatient surgery. Gulf States, like most other companies, pays 100 percent of the cost of certain surgical procedures (such as tonsillectomies, liver biopsies and broncoscopies) performed at outpatient facilities. Outpatient costs are usually 40 to 60 percent less than hospital charges, plus the savings in time. Patients can usually pre-register for surgery and many tests can be done in advance. Relatives and friends can be with patients before surgery and in the

expensive in the area. It would be up to you to pay the amount over the "reasonable and customary charge" out of your own pocket.

Twenty of the 22 companies in the benefits survey pay "reasonable and customary charges." Currently Gulf States pays up to the "reasonable and customary" charge for dental claims, but not for medical claims. According to Alexander & Alexander Benefits Services, one of the nation's largest benefits consulting and brokerage firms, paying full medical coverage rather than "reasonable and cus-

"No matter how you look at it, every claim represents a person. We want to make sure employees receive good care and that the care they receive is cost effective."

Jommy Holder

recovery room, so there's less emotional stress. After an hour or so in the recovery room, patients go home to recuperate.

Reasonable and customary charges. Computer records are kept on the costs for a certain procedure performed by various doctors in the area. The computer kicks out the highest 10 percent of these charges. The other 90 percent are considered to be the "reasonable and customary charge" for this procedure. So, if part of your claim is denied, you would know that your doctor is one of the most

tomary charges" resulted in over three-quarters of a million dollars in additional costs for GSU in 1987.

Preadmission testing. Typically an employee is admitted to the hospital before scheduled surgery for tests. Many of these tests can be done on an outpatient basis within five days before surgery. Gulf States would pay 100 percent for these preadmission tests, saving employees time and money.

Utilization review. Utilization review (UR) represents a potential significant savings to the medical plans. The savings occur when

on health care costs

unnecessary or excessive hospital admissions are eliminated or reduced. The positive thing about UR is that, when used properly, the employee's benefits are not reduced, but in many cases the total cost of treatment is.

The usual way the "review" takes place is: Before a non-emergency hospital admission, the patient or the patient's doctor would call a toll free 800 number giving a registered nurse the patient's name, the date due to be admitted, the doctor's name and the reason for admission. The RN contacts the patient's doctor to certify the stay for a certain number of days, based on accepted medical practices. If a longer stay is anticipated, the RN contacts the doctor to see if the patient needs to be in the hospital or if recuperation would be better at home or in another facility. Half of the companies in the recent survey have utilization reviews, which result in substantial cost savings in medical claims. Gulf States does not.

Hospice care. A hospice is a facility where terminally ill patients can spend their final days in a home-like atmosphere, but still receive the nursing care needed. In some cases hospice care is rendered in the patient's home. Hospice care in a hospice or at home is less expensive and generally less stressful than a hospital stay. The GSU medical plans provide hospice care benefits.

Home health care. Sometimes a patient is confined to the hospital because he needs special equipment or medication administered by a nurse. With home health care, this equipment and medication can be provided within the comfort of the home. This benefit is provided by the GSU medical plans.

Large case management. The computers of Provident, GSU's insurance carrier, can identify patients with potential long-term, costly medical problems such as a premature baby or severe injuries requiring rehabilitation. On these cases a nurse coordinator works with the patient, the physician and family, to determine the best treatment options and to insure quality care. For example, a patient may recover quicker in a specialized treatment center in another city. If so, this facility will be made available to the patient. The GSU medical plans provide large case management on a case-by-case basis. The patient receives better care and the company and employees save money. During January and February 1988, the medical plans saved about \$90,000 through large claim management.

"No matter how you look at it," says Holder, "every claim represents a person. We want to make sure our employees receive good care and that the care they receive is cost effective. That way, everybody benefits."



Companies across the nation are trying to find a cure for the rising cost of medical care.

For substance abusers

Employee Advisory Service offers help

Alcohol and drug abuse affects people everywhere, whether or not they abuse the substances themselves. To help employees with substance abuse problems, five years ago Gulf States initiated the Employee Advisory Service. Plain Talks recently talked with Robert A. Gay, Ph.D., EAS adviser, about substance abuse.

What is substance abuse?

Substance abuse occurs when an individual utilizes drugs or alcohol to a point where it significantly affects his behavior in a negative way. It will have an impact on the way they think and feel about themselves, it may affect their performance on the job and it may also affect their health.

Is substance abuse common in the workplace?

Very. The frequency is high enough and the impact is strong enough that it's a very expensive proposition for business and industry. The usual figure quoted for chemical dependency or significant drug abuse is about 10 percent — 10 percent of the employees of any organization.

Many people would say about substance abusers — 'Well that's a personal problem, it's not a work problem.' How do you answer that?

Sure it's a personal problem. But it's also going to impact their work. That, of course, is the rationale for the company's interest in helping the individual with substance abuse problems. Through EAS, the company provides assistance without unnecessarily interfering in a person's private life. There is an opportunity here to get help for your substance abuse problems and have one of the positive effects be better performance on the job.

What is the process for an employee who has a problem?

The whole program is designed

to facilitate that person getting help, whatever it takes. He can go straight to a helping professional on his own. He can go to one of the volunteer advisers and talk confidentially to them. He can come straight to me. He can go to his supervisor or union steward. All of those people have been through training about how to refer the person for assistance.

Do you see any trends in substance abuse?

Recently I have had the opportunity to work more and more with cocaine addiction. We had very little of that when we started five years ago but there has been a significant increase in the past several years. Cocaine is a very tough addiction to deal with. It's a scary drug. I think almost anyone is sus-

"The person that is chemically dependent is ... the last one to know."

ceptible to cocaine addiction. A lot of people can get addicted to it and they get addicted fast.

What happens to someone who is chemically dependent, is there a typical downslide?

Over a period of time, what a friend or coworker or supervisor might notice is the person's attitude toward work might change. They might go from being very enthusiastic to not seeming to care. If you are sensitive to changes in people, you'll start to see a pattern of behavior that doesn't fit the way they used to be. And you don't have to wait until you are sure what the problem is. It's best to deal with these changes as soon as possible.

How do you get the attention of substance abusers who don't feel that they have a problem, who don't feel that they need advice?

The basic technique is to elicit the help of individuals who are

influential on the person concerned. A friend, a supervisor, a co-worker, a spouse, a child — somebody that is in the circle of support of this individual. Get as many of those people as possible to say to this person, 'I think you've got a problem and I want you to get help for it.' Tell them, 'You've changed. You're doing things you didn't do before. And it's worrying me. I don't know what it is, but there must be something going on in your life that's causing you problems and I want you to know that I care. And there is somewhere you can go for help.'

Rather than try to figure out what is causing the problem, pay attention to the changes in the person's behavior and comment on that. That's what's going to break through. Because if you take a guess about what the root cause is, you might well be wrong. Or even if you're right, if the person is chemically dependent, he is going to deny it. That's a hallmark of the disease. The person that's chemically dependent is, as they say, the last one to know. And he's got a lot of practice in denying it because his wife has already told him. He doesn't want to hear it from you, too.

But what he needs to hear is, 'You were supposed to be at work on Monday and, since you weren't here Monday, I had to do your shift. And I really don't appreciate that.'

That's the way you say it, you recite instances. That's what he needs to hear. And you suggest that he gets help. 'This is what I'm saying, this is how I feel about it and this is what I want you to do.'

That works. When enough people say that enough times, it works.

For help from EAS, contact the EAS representative at your location or Dr. Gay at (713) 835-3484.

Leroy Bodeman



Corgey honored ...

Donald Corgey, system supervisor of testing and maintenance, stands before a sculpture titled **Helping Hands** at Beaumont City Council chambers. The sculpture is one of three works of art dedicated by City Council as a memorial to his wife, Myrtle Corgey. Mrs. Corgey served as City Clerk from 1972 until her death in June 1987.

Vairin serves as ITVA judge

Lynn Vairin, River Bend audio-visual support specialist, served as festival chairman for the International Television Association's 20th annual video festival. As such, she coordinated the judging of over 1,000 entries. The ITVA festival is devoted to honoring outstanding corporate video productions. Vairin was among those presenting the awards on April 16 at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

Donna Fancher



River Bend employees' club organizes, board recognized

Eight River Bend Station employees received Certificates of Appreciation for establishing the River Bend Employees' Club. Appointed by Jim Deddens, senior vice president-River Bend Nuclear Group, the honorees established a recreational club and served as temporary directors until a permanent board was elected.

"With little guidelines, this group used initiative, hard work

and numerous off duty hours to successfully start the employees' club," says new board president Claude Foster. Foster and Deddens presented the certificates on behalf of the permanent board. Pictured from left are Matt Merkel, Foster, Sue Marino, Roger Carlyle, Joan Lundholm, Tony Fredieu, Deddens, Andy Dreher and Dave Reynolds. Not pictured is Tom Murphy.

Davidson receives firefighting awards

Keith Davidson, Zachary meter reader, was honored March 5 by the Livonia (La.) Volunteer Fire Department, reports Zachary correspondent Myra Ponthier.

Fellow firefighters chose him for the Fireman of the Year Award for assisting them with training and instruction in fire ground operations. Fire Chief Dale Bergeron honored him with the Chief's Award for devoting unlimited time to station and truck duties.

Davidson is also a nationally registered Emergency Medical Technician.



Keith Davidson credits the support of his family for his active involvement with the Livonia Volunteer Fire Department.

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Photo courtesy Tyler County Booster



Thanks to the Woodville office ...

Accepting a \$320 donation from the linemen and staff of GSU's Woodville office is Jack Long, director of Caring is Sharing (CIS), a non-denominational Christian mission providing emergency aid to residents of Tyler County. "We continue to see an increase in the need for our service in Tyler County," writes CIS president Ann Morrison. "Your gift will make our work with the needy of Tyler County much easier." Employees pictured are James Collier, Phillip Martin, Gordon McCabe, Keith Hayes, Alene Cole, Betty Cauthen, Grady McClusky, Tim Durr, Gene Koci, Jamie Pike, Royce Best, Ted Borowski, Daniel Mitchell, J. D. Spurlock, Ruby Risinger and Darrell Waldrep.